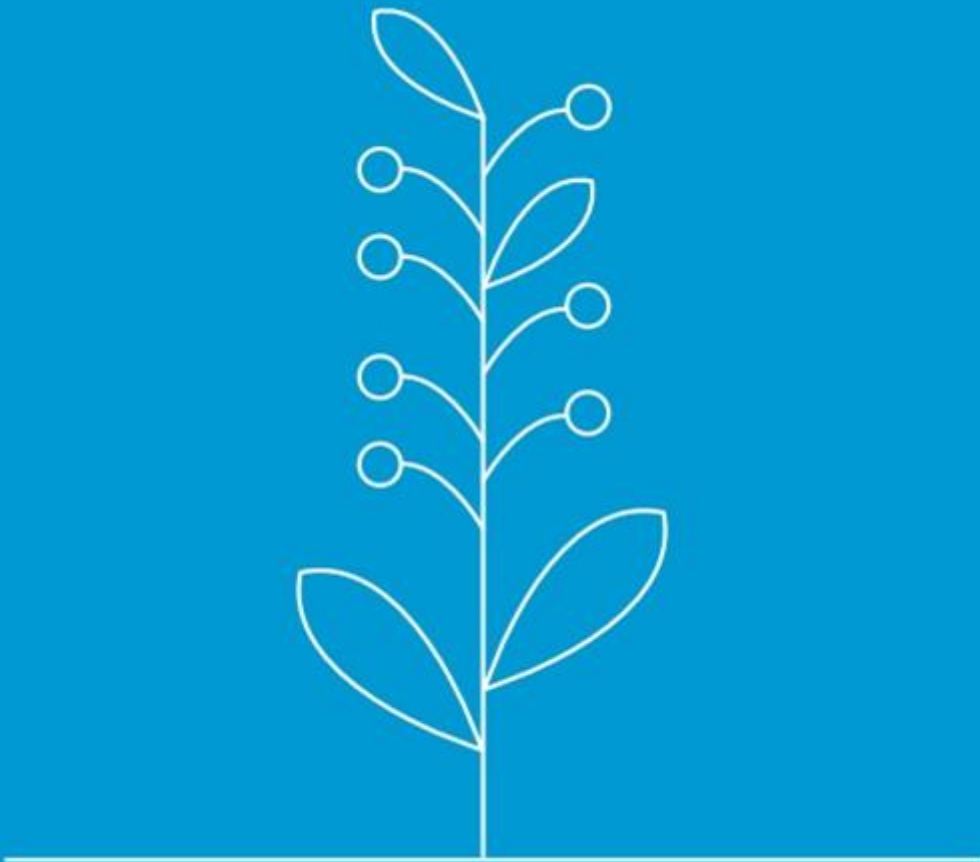


# Strategic Plan

## 2025 - 2035



Dental Council

Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho



# Foreword

Tēna koutou katoa

The environment in which we operate is complex and ever evolving. We are influenced by shifting societal, public and government expectations. We see practice changes are common with innovation and new and emerging technologies are regularly being deployed.

At the Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho we work with an eye to the future so that we can prepare and enable the right regulatory settings for this innovation. We do this to be a trusted regulator that ensures the safe oral healthcare for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Strategic planning is crucial for navigating the complexities and seizing opportunities that lie ahead. This strategic plan which builds upon our previous strategies outlines our vision, strategic objective, outcomes, focus, and the strategic initiatives that will guide us into the future.

Our vision: *The public are safe, healthy, and empowered to participate in their health care* provides the long-term aspiration of the Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho. We want a future where the public of Aotearoa New Zealand are safe, are healthy, and are empowered to participate in the health care they receive.

Our strategic objective: *Be a trusted regulator that ensures safe oral health care for Aotearoa New Zealand* is our specific target that the Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho seeks to achieve.

The outcomes provide a long-term view of the impact we seek to make over the next ten years.

- The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho meets its Te Tiriti o Waitangi aspirations and has effective and appropriate relationships and with Māori, whānau, hapū and iwi
- The public receive good oral health care

- Practitioners continuously uphold their competence, safety and ethical standards throughout their careers
- The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho is a credible regulator

By aligning our resources and efforts we will protect the health and safety of the public while delivering exceptional value.

This document is the result of extensive collaboration and input from our Council, managers, staff and stakeholders. It reflects our collective aspirations and the strategic pathway we have identified to reach our goal.

We invite you to engage with this plan, understand its objective, and contribute to its successful implementation. Together, we can navigate the future with confidence and purpose.

Ngā mihi



**Andrew Cautley**  
Chair



# Chief Executive message

Kia ora tatou

It is with great enthusiasm that I present to you our strategic plan, a comprehensive roadmap designed to steer our organisation and prepare us for the future. Effective regulation of oral health practitioners ensures they uphold their competence, safety and ethical standards throughout their careers, which protects the health and safety of the public.

In today's dynamic environment, it is imperative that we remain agile, -future thinking, and committed to excellence.

We have set the following foci to support the achievement of our strategic objective and our outcomes:

- Give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Understand the oral health care experiences of the public
- Empower practitioners know and understand their obligations
- Work across the sector to ensure oral health practitioners deliver culturally safe care
- Develop the right capability and capacity to deliver our regulatory impact
- Contribute to the wider health sector to effect good regulation and systems

We continue to follow good regulatory practice for our practitioners and the educational programmes that we accredit while protecting the public from harm.

Our ten -year focus for this strategy provides for change to be made successfully and sustainably over time.

The work we do is aligned to the strategy and as our environment changes, we will need to adapt and revisit to make sure it continues to support us, the practitioners we regulate, the educational programmes that we accredit, and the public we protect.

The strategic initiatives in this plan see us continuing to improve health equity, preventing and responding to harm, strengthening our regulatory intelligence, while ensuring that our people and culture support our future with the

right people, doing the right things, at the right time.

Our regulatory role of protecting public health and safety by ensuring health professionals are safe, competent, and fit to practice is ever present in the work the work that we do. It is our reason for being.

The effective and efficient administration of our regulatory functions continues to be a priority for us. Our -right touch approach based on the principles of proportionate, consistent, targeted, transparent. accountable, and agile is being augmented, over time, to include a risk basis informed from our regulatory intelligence.

Our strengthened regulatory intelligence will provide the evidence to support decision making and the use of our regulatory interventions.

As we continue this journey, I am confident that our dedicated team, innovative spirit, and unwavering commitment to our values will drive us to new heights. This plan is not just a document; it is a call to action for each of us to contribute our best efforts towards our shared objective of *being a trusted regulator that ensures safe oral health care for Aotearoa New Zealand.*

Heoi anō



**Marie MacKay**  
Chief Executive

# Contents

<b>Strategic plan overview</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
Our journey started in 2015	3
Public health and safety is why we regulate	3
Our focus	3
<b>Our strategic plan</b>	<b>4</b>
Our vision, our regulatory role and purpose	4
<b>Our strategic objective, outcomes, and focuses</b>	<b>6</b>
Our strategic objective	6
Our strategic outcomes	6
Our strategic focuses	7
Our strategic initiatives	9
Our values	11
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>12</b>
Monitoring, reporting, and making changes as we go	12



# Strategic plan overview

Our vision

The public are safe, healthy, and empowered to participate in their health care

Our strategic objective

Be a trusted regulator that ensures safe oral health care for Aotearoa New Zealand



## Our strategic outcomes

Our outcomes set our long-term destination:

The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho meets its te Tiriti o Waitangi aspirations and has effective and appropriate relationships with Māori, whānau, hapū and iwi

The public receive good oral health care

Practitioners continuously uphold their competence, safety and ethical standards throughout their careers

The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho is a credible regulator



## Focuses

To reach our destination our shorter-term focus is to:

Give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi

Understand the oral health care experiences of the public

Empower practitioners to know and understand their obligations

Work across the sector to ensure oral health practitioners deliver culturally safe care

Develop the right capability and capacity to deliver our regulatory impact

Contribute to the wider health sector to effect good regulation and systems



## Our Strategic Initiatives

The strategic changes we are making are to:

### Improving health equity and cultural safety

- Provide supporting materials and guidance to support practitioners, the public and our people.
- Continue our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, weaving it into our processes, policy, and practice.

### Preventing and responding to harm

- Our new compliance framework will outline our approach to noncompliance, detailing our responses and the tools we use.
- Supporting and enabling practitioners to understand and meet their obligations.

### Strengthening our regulatory intelligence

- Integrate data from multiple sources to make our decision-making more evidence based.
- Collaborating with other organisations and employing advanced analysis tools will transform data into actionable insights for informed regulatory decisions.

### People and culture

- Enhance our capability and culture to align regulatory services with our objectives and the needs of practitioners and the public.
- Explore technologies that improve efficiency, meet societal expectations, and minimise our environmental impact for sustainable operation.

Our values

What's most important to our work:

Respect

Integrity

Collaboration

# Executive summary

This strategic plan leverages our past progress and achievements aiming to enhance public health and safety. Our strategic initiatives will improve health equity and cultural safety, prevent and respond to harm, strengthen our regulatory intelligence, and foster a positive culture supporting our people.

## Our journey started in 2015

This strategic plan builds on the direction that was set back in 2015 and established our right touch regulation and laid the foundations for us to become a risk-based regulator. Core to this work saw the introduction of our regulatory mechanisms including:

- our Standards Framework
- online services for practitioners
- improved financial systems and reporting
- recertification programme

From our 2022 strategic plan changes were introduced to the competencies across the professions and standards to strengthen requirements for cultural safety, cultural competence, and Hauora Māori.

Our journey continues with this, our latest strategic plan, to become a risk-based regulator and make greater use of regulatory intelligence and data to inform our interventions.

## Public health and safety is why we regulate

Our regulatory role remains unchanged with our primary purpose continuing to protect public health and safety.

Four important factors impact on safe care for patients:

- Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho understanding the extent of patient harm, making well-informed, evidence-based decisions, and collaborating and sharing information where appropriate.
- Practitioners practicing within their scope of practice and maintaining their fundamental knowledge, clinical skills and clinical judgement while meeting their

ethical obligations and professional practice standards.

- Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho using regulatory intelligence to identify risk areas and proactive regulatory interventions to educate and enhance practise.
- Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho responds to notifications and concerns ensuring that practitioners meet and maintain their competence and safety to practise throughout their careers.

Keeping these factors in mind we have updated this strategic plan to continue to build on our previous achievements and direction.

## Our focus

Our strategic objective aligns with our vision that *the public are safe, healthy, and empowered to participate in their health care.*

In this plan we continue moving forward and provide focus to:

- Give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Understand the oral health care experiences of the public
- Empower practitioners to know and understand their obligations
- Work with oral health practitioners to deliver culturally safe care
- Develop the right capability and capacity to deliver our regulatory impact
- Contribute to the wider health sector to effect good regulation and systems

These focuses steer and inform our operational delivery and our strategic initiatives.

# Our strategic plan

This plan does not change our strategic direction, but it does change how we work so that we can give effect to te Tiriti and better support our health and regulatory systems.

## Our vision, our regulatory role and purpose

### Our vision

Our vision sets out the ambitious result we aim to achieve. By focusing on patients, the public, practitioners and the broader health and regulatory systems, we have potential to positively impact patient outcomes extending beyond just safe oral health care.

*The public are safe, healthy, and empowered to participate in their health care.*

### Regulatory role and purpose

Legislation and government expectations heavily influence our regulatory role and purpose. Our primary purpose is set out in section 3 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act):

*to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing for mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practice their professions.*

We must also meet the performance expectations set by Government. These expectations inform our regulatory role to protect public health and safety.

The Ministry of Health reviews our regulatory performance under the Act. We are required to assure the public that oral health practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand are meeting the Act's requirements and any new health regulatory practice changes introduced from time to time.

Our strategic plan is influenced by other legislation, government priorities, societal expectations and changes in professional practice. Of particular consideration for Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho is:

- artificial Intelligence and its potential for improving efficiency, prioritising treatment, addressing health inequities, lowering the costs of treatment
- sustainability and minimising the environmental impact of oral health care including reducing waste, improving energy efficiency, using eco-friendly materials, and digital dentistry
- reform of the regulatory framework including change of Government policy and the proposal to replace of our primary legislation
- agility and flexibility in our regulatory approach to enable right-touch principles and mechanisms to respond to sector or system pressures.





Our strategic objective

**Safe oral health care for  
Aotearoa New Zealand**

# Our strategic objective, outcomes, and focuses

## Our strategic objective

Our strategic objective reflects a whole-of-system view that is focussed on the care that patients experience:

*Be a trusted regulator that ensures safe oral health care for Aotearoa New Zealand.*

---

## Our strategic outcomes

To realise our strategic objective, we work to contribute to our four strategic outcomes. Jointly these strategic outcomes set our long-term destination:



The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho meets its Te Tiriti o Waitangi aspirations and has effective and appropriate relationships with Māori, whānau, hapū, and iwi

The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho fulfills its aspirations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ensuring that its policies, practices, and relationships with Māori, whānau, hapū, and iwi are respectful, effective, and culturally appropriate. This outcome is aimed at fostering a healthcare environment that acknowledges and integrates the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, promoting equity, and enhancing the oral health outcomes for Māori communities through meaningful partnerships and engagement.



The public receive good oral health care

The public has access to oral health care, leading to improved overall health and wellbeing.

Oral health services are affordable, accessible, and effective, contributing to the prevention and treatment of oral health issues.



### Practitioners continuously uphold their competence, safety and ethical standards throughout their careers

Practitioners consistently demonstrate competence, safety, and ethical standards throughout their professional careers. This outcome ensures that oral healthcare professionals are continually updating their skills and knowledge, adhering to best practices, and maintaining a strong commitment to patient safety and ethical conduct.



### The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho is a credible regulator

The Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho is recognised as a credible regulator. This outcome ensures and enforces high standards of professional conduct on the profession and expects ongoing competence of oral health practitioners, transparency and accountability, and engagement with stakeholders. By doing so, public trust and confidence in the oral health professions is maintained and the public can expect the appropriate levels of patient safety and care.

---

## Our strategic focuses

As intermediate steps towards our strategic outcomes we set the following shorter-term focuses:



### Give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi

We will weave te Tiriti through our structure, strategies, processes, policies, and practices.

Te Hā operates as a council subcommittee to provide specialist expertise, guidance, and input to inform Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho.

We will take practitioners with us to enable us to achieve our aspirations over time.



### Understand the oral health care experiences of the public

Our primary purpose is to protect the public health and safety. We need to understand the public experience of oral health care to measure the success of our regulatory interventions.

We will establish a consumer representative forum that will provide a strengthened patient voice to Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho. This voice will provide the lived experience of the public and will input to changes on strategy, policy, and practise.

Combined with this enhanced public voice we will analyse our regulatory systems and other data to expose intelligence on the patient experience.



### Empower practitioners to know and understand their obligations

With our right touch regulatory approach, we rely on most practitioners meeting their obligations and voluntarily complying.

Our competencies and standards are secondary legislation that define the minimal expectation of practice and conduct. Where practitioners fail to meet these minimum requirements, we take action to assist practitioners back to compliance or hold them to account as appropriate.

Our compliance strategy will provide transparency on the regulatory tools utilised when professional performance does not meet the required standards.

Where our regulatory intelligence identifies areas of enhanced risk or adverse patient outcomes, we use our proactive regulatory interventions to educate and enhance practice.

By providing information and guidance to support practitioners on their legal obligations, competencies, practice and ethical standards we enable practitioners to continuously uphold their obligations ultimately ensuring the public's trust in the professions.



### Work across the sector to ensure oral health practitioners deliver culturally safe care

We need to complete the implementation of the changed competencies and standards that strengthen the requirements for cultural safety, cultural competence, and the updated practices to support hauora Māori.

This implementation will update our processes, policies, practices, and guidance materials. Together these steer our approach to our statutory purpose.



### Develop the right capability and capacity to deliver our regulatory impact

We need to be agile and future focussed to be aware of clinical and technological developments that impact on the delivery of oral health and prepare and respond to the evolving risks that may arise.

We also need to provide for efficient and effective operation of the regulatory system and ensure that needs of the public, practitioners, educators, and Aotearoa New Zealand are balanced and appropriately met.

To do this our regulatory functions need to continue to operate while we design, develop, and implement our strategic initiatives. This requires additional capability and capacity.



### Contribute to the wider health sector and regulatory systems

We work proactively and collaboratively with other regulatory authorities and agencies as stewards of the wider health and disability system.

This allows us to learn from the experiences of others while allowing others to learn from our work.

With Government policy change signalling reform and a possible replacement of our current Act we need to ensure that the mechanisms we create within any new government policy setting continues to support the health, safety and wellbeing of the public.



## Our strategic initiatives

While we work towards our long-term outcomes, we can't lose sight of the essential services and support we provide.

This strategic plan prioritises the work we need to do to balance credible and sustainable regulatory practice with achieving our strategic objective and long-term outcomes.

While each strategic initiative stands alone, they will also overlap as we work on them concurrently. For example, strengthening our regulatory intelligence and developing the data strategy will inform and impact on the new compliance framework and cultural safety initiatives.



### Improving health equity and cultural safety

We need to complete the work supporting oral health practitioners and our people implementing the necessary behavioural and practise changes to give effect to the changed requirements supporting cultural safety, cultural competence, and hauora Māori.

This work seeks to remove barriers to oral health care by requiring practitioners to understand that their own world views and beliefs can be different to their patients.

Improved health equity is realised by practitioners understanding their own power and privilege, reflecting and adapting their service delivery to meet the needs of their patients.

Partnerships and working strategically with others are the ways we support and influence measures to address health inequity. The Dental Council is developing relationships with appropriate organisations and groups to develop understanding on joint interests and aspirations to work together on.



### Preventing and responding to harm

As a right-touch risk-based regulator, we need to apply our resources and efforts where the harm or risk of harm is. This is how we maximise our impact and allows us to be effective and efficient with our regulatory approach.

Our new compliance framework will include a compliance strategy that provides transparency on how we respond to noncompliance, including our proportionate response, and the regulatory and nonregulatory tools we use. This strategy will be underpinned by te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The risk framework will evaluate and categorise the actual harm and the risk of harm that noncompliance exposes patients and the public too. This framework provides for consistency in regulatory approach ensuring we are fair, reasonable, and proportionate in the actions we take.

By working together helping practitioners to comply with their obligations we support change back to voluntary compliance.



### Strengthening our regulatory intelligence

Enhancing our regulatory intelligence by augmenting the data we hold already with data from other sources and using this information to inform our decision making is how we become more evidence based.

We will collaborate with other organisations and seek to incorporate data from other sources into our regulatory data storage.

Enhanced analysis and reporting tools will enable the transformation of this data into actionable insights support regulatory interventions and decision making.

We will disseminate and share this intelligence through our website, engagement with practitioners, newsletters, and reporting. Empowering practitioners with information on the risks and risk of harm enables them to consider and potentially mitigate risks before they are realised.

New skills supporting our enhanced intelligence capability will be developed and embedded in Dental Council | Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho providing for the sustained administration, analysis of data, understanding of information and trends, and dissemination of intelligence.

We will explore the use of Artificial Intelligence tools to assist in the assessment of overseas educational programmes and to improve and streamline our comparative assessments of overseas trained practitioners.



### People and culture

Supporting the implementation of our strategic plan requires development of our capabilities and culture. As we step into the future, we need to align our regulatory service delivery to our strategic objective and the needs of our practitioners and the public.

To deliver this strategic plan we need to supplement our team temporarily with additional skills and resources beyond our normal capacity and capability. This enables our everyday activity to continue alongside our strategic delivery.

Good regulatory service provides for safe oral health care for Aotearoa New Zealand. This is provided using our right-touch risk-based regulatory model.

We need to explore and implement technologies and enablers that allow us to be more effective and efficient while responding to societal expectations that we minimise our environmental impact and operate sustainably.

## Our values

Our values are an important feature of our strategic plan and support how we operate. They encapsulate what's important to us.

They inform how we work regardless of whether we are working with patients, regulated parties, educators, or other agencies. We have a dedicated team who work hard to meet the needs of a wide range of stakeholders. Our staff apply our values consistently and demonstrate the behaviours



### Respect

- We honour Māori as tangata whenua and commit to understanding te Ao Māori
- We treat all people fairly, with empathy, and without personal favour or bias
- We are supportive of people's dignity and rights
- We support, and are accountable to each other in a considerate way
- We recognise and celebrate our successes



### Integrity

- We are honest and fair
- We use risk-based right touch principles
- We respond in ways that are equitable for the circumstances



### Collaboration

- We work with others for a shared purpose
- We actively listen and consider feedback
- We do our jobs well to enable us to build and sustain our relationships
- We actively listen and consider feedback
- We do our jobs well to enable us to build and sustain our relationships



# Implementation

Our strategic plan is a living plan. We'll need to regularly review our progress and adjust if something isn't working and if it is the right thing to do.

## Monitoring, reporting, and making changes as we go

This plan is supported with a work programme to spread the effort and cost of regulatory improvement over time. We report to stakeholders on our activities in our annual report and advise changes to the strategic plan when we consult on budget, fees, and levies every year. The data strategy will enable us to develop outcome measures and a stronger reporting dashboard.



Dental Council  
Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho